FEBRUARY 2015 A.S L

Meiassis Dragon

THE BARONY OF DRAGONSSPINE

Embroidery and Couching and Lace, Oh My!

The Needlework Issue

A "Cheeky" Lion by Maitresse Mathilde Bourette
Intarsia technique
Based upon 15th century Swedish wall hanging

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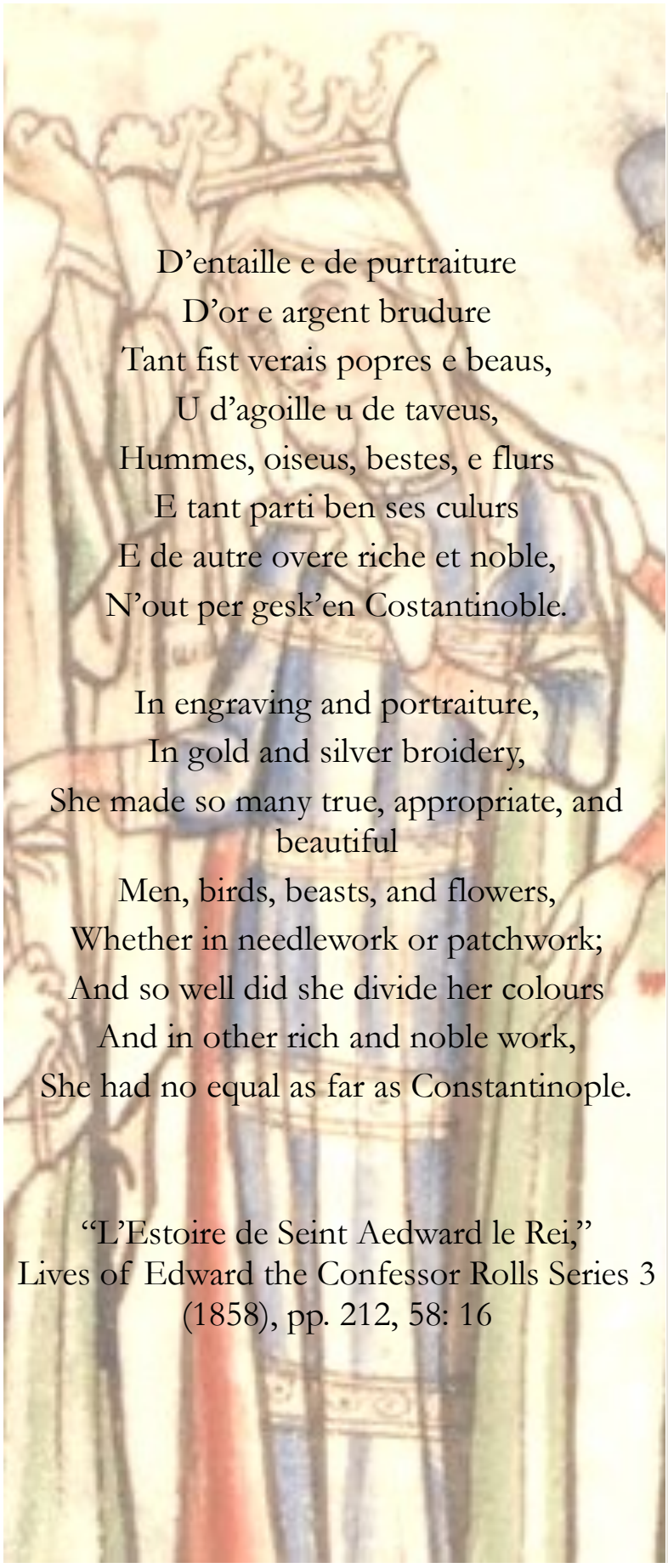


D'entaille e de purtraiture
D'or e argent brudure
Tant fist verais popres e beaus,
U d'agoille u de taveus,
Hummes, oiseus, bestes, e flurs
E tant parti ben ses culurs
E de autre overe riche et noble,
N'out per gesk'en Costantinoble.

In engraving and portraiture,
In gold and silver broidery,
She made so many true, appropriate, and beautiful
Men, birds, beasts, and flowers,
Whether in needlework or patchwork;
And so well did she divide her colours
And in other rich and noble work,
She had no equal as far as Constantinople.

"L'Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei,"
Lives of Edward the Confessor Rolls Series 3
(1858), pp. 212, 58: 16

Upcoming Events

February 2016		
6	Caerthe	Tri-Baronial A&S#
7	Saint Golias	Southern War Practice
13	Aarquelle	As You Wish: Boys & Girls Club Fundraiser
23-29	Atenveldt	Estrella War#
March 2016		
12	Citadel of the Southern Pass	Crown Tournament#*
12-20	Glenn Abhann	Gulf Wars#
April 2016		
9	Saint Golias	Kingdom A&S
29-1	Artemesia	Known World Heraldic and Scribal Symposium
30	Unser Hafen	Unser HAfen Investiture
30	al-Barran	Albuquerque Renaissance Faire
May 2016		
7-8	Nahrun Kabirun	Masquerade Ball
14-15	Aarquelle	Coronation#*
26-30	al-Barran	Grand Outlandish VLIII
27-30	Caerthe	The Siege at Inlandish
June 2016		
3-5	Dragonsspine	Champions
17-27	Society	SCA 50th Year Celebration
23-26	Plattefordham	Northern Realm War
30-4	Drygestan	Keepers of Dry Stone
July 2016		
1-3	Unser Hafen	Heroes and Legends
8-10	Caer Galen	Caer Galen Defender
15-17	Aarquelle	Aarquelle Highlands Rapier Camp
21-24	Rio de las Animas	Defender of the Silver Pass
29-31	Draca Mor	Summer Tournament and Games (STAG_
30	al-Barran	Nock on Wood

events on TRM progress * events on TE Dragonsspine progress

Herald's Report

Herald News/Article/ETC for January 28, 2016 submission to Meiassis Dragon from Duchess Selene of the Sky, Scalene Pursuivant

General Information

Duchess Selene of the Sky, Scalene Pursuivant

Penny Tegen
Preferred email address:
pennytegen@yahoo.com

Deputies:

Lady Liliona Ruth Hampton (mka Leslie Sheley)

Lord Seamus MacRae (mka Matthew Willis)

Court Voice – as appointed by Baron/Baroness, and may be a rotating position

Note: this gives several people experience as the voice of the Baronial Court

Summary of submissions for the last quarter of 2015:

October:
Name:
Bjorn the Bastard
Device:
Reyna Frogge
Device Resubmissions:
Cecelia Caterina da Firenze
Isabella Maria Francesco
Seamus MacRae

November:
Name:
Florie ingen Edde de Brae Mharr
Godric Friis
Device:
Liliona Ruth Hampton

December:
Badge:
Abigail Mac Naught
Device Resubmission:
Reyna Frogge

Dragonsspinians whose names, devices, and badges were passed in 2015.

Name:

Connor Buchanan of Loch Lomond

Cuelino of Northanhymbre – later corrected to Cuhelyn of Northanhymbre

Rosalynn Buchanan of Loch Lomond

Cecilia Caterina da Firenze (change from Cecilia Wrenne)

Liliona Ruth Hampton

Reyna Frogge

Hergeirr Audinsson (change from Matthias Fledermus. Original name has been retained as an alternate persona)

Viridiana Corbeau

Device:

Abigail MacNaught

Cuhelyn of Northanhymbre

Gianni Sangermano

Maximilian Kern

Greetings,

This year at Battlemoor there will be a museum that will celebrate the 30 year history of our mighty kingdom. To that end I am looking for items to display that will help to capture some of our kingdom's glorious history and pre-history. Such pieces can include (but not be limited to): regalia, scrolls, event flyers, gatebooks, Outlandish Heralds, pictures, A&S projects, significant group documents, etc. If you have some of the aforementioned items which you are willing to loan and/or copy please contact me.

Please know that we are making arrangments to protect the artifacts as much as possible. This includes (and again not limited to) being within a sturdy and enclosed tent, using protective display mounts (such as plastic coverings), and setting them off the ground on sturdy tables and display boards. We can work with you on any particular concerns that you may have. We can similarly work with you on transporting the items.

Additionally, if you are interested in being a curator or docent for this display, please contact me. I would like to have a grand display and therefore will need assistance.

I hope that you can help make this museum truly spectacular. If nothing else, do come prepared to feast your eyes on a collective and great history.

YIS,
Master Jethro Stille

The Art of Research

By THL Cassandra of Glastonbury

This article was first published on the Middle Kingdom Guild of Withie and Woolmongers website, http://mktag.org/

The Art of Research

by THL Cassandra of Glastonbury

Introduction

So, you have the research fever. The only cure is to go forth on an informational quest. Whether your plans include an A&S entry, an Insanity Project, an article, or simply satisfying your curiosity, research is a way to touch the past by exploring how something was done. The challenge is the more common anything was the less information seems to be available. The textile arts are notorious for this. After all, every woman could spin and weave from childhood.

Books

Bibliographies are a gold mine of potential reading material. They can be found in the back of a book you already have, in an article, or on the web. Annotated bibliographies describe what is in the book and why the creator of the bibliography thought the book is worth a read. The more specific your research, the less time you have to read books, that while are interesting, do not pertain to the topic at hand.

Interlibrary Loan (ILL) is your friend. Libraries can order a fortune in rare and obscure books for you free or for a nominal charge. Libraries connected to a college or university have even better luck ordering for you than will your local library. Sometimes you do not even need to be a current student. Many libraries extend lending privileges to alumni or community members.

To buy or borrow, that is the question. Several factors to consider are budget, space, and contents. How much does that book cost and what will I have to give up to get it? Where am I going to put it? No, adding on to the house is NOT really my best option. Are the contents worth the cost and shelf space? My rule is that after I have borrowed the book three times I might as well shut up and buy it.

Medieval Researchers on the Web

There are many web sites and newsgroups to pursue. Use caution. There is a lot of information available and some of it is not reliable. Double-check your findings and your sources. A site published by a university or research foundation has more creditability than a "personal" site.

If you plan on citing a web site, get permission from the owner. There are copyright laws to be considered. It is the same for books and articles.

Learn how to use the advanced search features in your favorite search engine. Three to five words should give you a manageable return for your efforts. I like www.google.com because it will let me search web sites, newsgroups, and pictures. There are also specialized search engines that are geared for one topic only. Several are designed with medieval studies in mind.

Some newsgroups have search engines within the group. This is a great feature for finding that thread that you were not interested in six months ago. While the content of newsgroups may be primarily opinions, they can provide useful how-to or how-not-to information from someone who actually tried to do what you are researching. They are also good sites for book reviews because some of the members are obsessive enough to read everything that pertains to their field of interest.

Museums

Museums are wonderful sources for primary documentation. There are specialized museums that focus solely on one area of expertise. Also consider your local museums. They can bring in traveling exhibits. Admittance fees are generally reasonable. Some forbid the use of cameras, so it is a good idea to check policy before visiting. If you are fortunate to be on good terms with the curator, it might be possible to obtain a closer look at some of the exhibits.

Exantant specimens are a primary source. There is no arguing with a bog or burial find. It can be measured, photographed, and subjected to all sorts of tests. We know where it was found and what was around it.

The sad truth is that textiles do not hold up well. If wool, many insects consider them to be food. If plant fiber, they become compost. Bogs do a good job of preservation, however, the tannin can interfere with accurate carbon dating and mask signs of dyeing.

A museum presents you with your chance to see the object of your quest live with only a plate of glass separating the two of you. Here

The Art of Research

lives a source of primary documentation – maybe. Check the fine print. A replication, however carefully researched and reproduced is still a replication. Museums will use these and label them as such, commonly when setting up displays or tableaux. Forgeries and hoaxes can be done so well that even the curators are fooled. This is especially true if the hoax is also several hundred years old.

Consider how the artifact is preserved and displayed. Was it necessary to use a stiffener, backing, or frame to display the fragments? Also consider how it was treated during its life before the museum. A large tapestry may have been cut up into pillow-sized squares when the fashion changed. The gown may have been mended poorly or remade from an older gown. Did some unknown artist touch up a faded painting or tapestry 200 years ago thus changing details and chemical compositions?

My experimentation with "Virtual" Museums left me convinced that they were for people with high speed internet access and those interested in an overview. The interfaces need work and I want the option to get details on individual parts of exhibits. Like most weavers, I am not happy unless I can get thread counts, drafts, fiber micron readings, and any other bit of trivia that comes to mind.

Visuals

Portraits are an excellent source of information regarding the art of painting. Since an artist made his living by rendering his clients in the most flattering light possible, take the image with a grain of salt. It helps to remember definitions of beautiful and elegant have changed drastically over centuries. Without seeing the cloth up close and having a chance to turn the gown inside out to see the seams, we have no way to know what details were altered by the painter or how the gown really looked.

Some pictures from other sources, such as a Book of Hours show people engaged in humble (useful) occupations. Please consider artistic license and that the artist likely has never turned a hand at the work portrayed. There is one picture of a dyer that shows folded cloth lying next to the dye pot where it could be splashed and ruined. Another shows a loom that is physically impossible to work and a lady attempting to weave.

Records

Court records are another source of information about what people owned, used, and how they lived. You can find wills, contracts, and lawsuits pertaining the creation and disposal of textiles. The main drawback with these is that the people keeping records do not go into great detail about the items in question or about their construction. However, you can find wage, guild, and other economic information here.

Great households kept detailed inventories of household furnishings and clothing. Some of these listed not only the cost for the materials, but also the cost of the labor. With clothing, it was very apparent that the bulk of the cost was in the material, not the labor. Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd by Janet Arnold is an excellent example of such a resource.

Experimentation

So, you've read the books, looked at the pictures, chatted with those who share your interests, taken a pilgrimage to a museum, and still wonder what it would be like to weave enough cloth for a gown. A project researched and completed from the raw materials through the use of the finished product gives a very tangible form of reality to the research and to the work and skill that go into something as basic as clothing. Here is where you find the small gaps in your research. There are small steps that are omitted from records and pictures because the details were common and "everybody" knew how to do that. Great detail was kept on the making of a queen's gown, but not that of a village granny's gown.

Conclusion

Just hand over the data and no one has to get hurt.

About the author: *THL Cassandra of Glastonbury (OE, APF, CW, AOA) is a chirurgeon (regional) She is an English lady who enjoys tending her loom, garden, and stillroom.*

Alexis Abarria weaves both inkle bands and fabric, spins, dyes, and makes felt.

So what's the deal with worsted vs wollen?

By: Maistreas Siobhan nic hleibhe

"So what's the deal with this worsted vs. woolen thing?"

by Maistreas Siobhan nic Dhuinnshleibhe

A lot of folks have asked me this through the years. For quite a while my answer was "Good question." After giving this answer an embarrassing number of times, sense finally prevailed and I decided to find out so I could reply "Ok, here's the deal" instead. Well, I finally got an answer. Rather than trying to explain things several times to different folks (and depending on how much sleep I haven't had, confusing people even more than usual!) I thought I'd write a brief explanation here so it can be referenced whenever you may need. But now that I have an answer for you, uh...well...instead of "Ok, here's the deal," let's try "Ok. Put on your thinking cap and bear with me for a few minutes."

"Woolen" and "Worsted" not only pertain to weight/size of yarn, but to how a yarn is spun, and how fiber is prepared before spinning. And just to make things more confusing, very few spinners spin fibers that are considered truly worsted or truly woolen. Told you it was going to take a few minutes - got that thinking cap on?

In a Nutshell:

"Woolen", basically means that the individual fibers of varying lengths are going in many different directions, overlapping each other at a variety of angles and leaving air spaces between the individual fibers. "Worsted" means that the individual fibers are roughly the same length and are running parallel to each other and only overlapping at the tips, leaving little to no space between the individual fibers.

Now that we've got a slightly better grasp on these concepts, let's apply these concepts to fiber preparation and spinning of the fiber.

Fiber preparation:

When fibers are carded, be it on hand cards, a drum carder or purchased from a vendor as roving, the fibers are brushed back and forth in order to remove any second cuts or vegetable matter and to break up the separate locks of wool. Shorter fibers and longer fibers are blended together. (For example, a fleece where the undercoat is blended with guard hairs). When drawn out into roving or rolled off a card into a rolag, the individual fibers themselves overlap at a variety of angles and all along the length of the individual fibers, leaving air spaces throughout the roving/rolag and having a very soft, lofty appearance. When these fibers are spun together, they will trap air spaces between the jumbled-up fibers and make a yarn that is very warm with a soft feel. With frequent wear, these fibers or yarns will be prone to felting and/or pilling because they do not have the tight smooth finish of worsted fibers, but they will be infinitely warmer than worsted fibers because of the air spaces and softer finish.

When fiber is combed with wool combs or the ends of locks are flicked with a flicker, the fibers are arranged parallel to each other and only overlap each other at the tips instead of the widely varying angles that carded fibers do. This was traditionally done with the longer wools, so that any shorter fibers are removed, (think separating and undercoat or second cuts from longer fibers) leaving all the remaining fibers roughly the same length. As the fibers are parallel, there is very little air space between the fibers so that when the fibers are spun as is or pulled out into top, the fiber will have a smooth, often dense appearance. When these fibers are spun together there will be little to no air spaces between these fibers and make a yarn that is very strong and smooth with a silky or harder feel than carded yarns. These yarns are not prone to felting and pilling with frequent wear, but they will not feel as soft against the skin nor be as warm as carded yarns.

Fiber Spinning:

When observing spinners, you will notice that some will take a length of fiber and fold it over their fingers, forming a V-shape so that the fibers catch the twist in the center and are thus spun into yarn. This is called "spinning from the fold." Folding the fibers thus helps them to overlap each other more, trapping air in the yarn and making it soft - making it a woolen-spun yarn. You can also spin fibers by drafting out a portion of fiber and then adding twist as the fiber is pulled out further. This is called an English long draw, and was traditionally done with wools where the fibers

So what's the deal with worsted vs wollen?

were no longer than the shorter edges of a hand card.

Others will spin from the end of the length of the fibers only so that the fibers stay close together and have little chance to overlap. Preventing these fibers from overlapping as they are spun will make the yarn denser and smoother. In addition they are spun on a short point of twist draw to make a denser thread - making it a worsted-spun yarn.

Now here's where confusion tends to rear it's ugly head - if you spin a woolen fiber worsted, what is it? If you spin a worsted fiber woolen, what is it? How do the fiber preparation and fiber spinning impact the finished yarn? There are two ways of answering such questions, which we'll refer to as the "Yarn Police" answer and the "Practical" answer. One is very black and white, cut and dried, that's it, period. The other deals in shades of gray, is much more laid back, and easier for most spinners to live with.

To the "Yarn Police," the only way to get a worsted yarn is to spin fiber that has been prepared worsted with the worsted spinning technique - meaning that fibers must either be combed or flicked to remove any shorter hairs and then spun from the tips only. Every fiber must be parallel in every respect, and not a hair out of place (pardon the pun). Everything else, no matter how prepared or spun, is woolen. Either in preparation or spinning, chaotic disorder has interrupted the perfect parallel symmetry of the fibers, thus allowing airspaces and non-parallel overlap to occur.

To the more practical-minded, there are degrees of worsted-ness and woolen-ness. A worsted fiber spun worsted is a "true-worsted" yarn. A worsted fiber spun woolen is a "semi-??????" yarn. A woolen fiber spun woolen is a "true-woolen" yarn, and woolen fiber spun worsted is a "semi-worsted" yarn. Confused? Ok, let's put it this way:

- If you spin combed or flicked fibers where the shorter fibers have been removed with a long worsted with a short draw, you'll get a true-worsted yarn.
- If you spin top or pin-carded roving worsted with either a long or a short draw (regardless of if the shorter fibers were removed or not), you get a semi-worsted yarn.
- If you spin combed or flicked fibers (regardless of if the shorter fibers were removed or not) woolen, you get a semi-woolen yarn.
- If you spin roving or rolags woolen, you get a woolen yarn.
- If you spin roving or rolags worsted, you get a semi-worsted yarn.

To sum up:

True worsted yarn is spun only from combed or flicked fibers where the short fibers have been removed from the long fibers, and they are all parallel to each other and you spin them from one end. Spinning worsted method on other fiber preparations are semi worsted, and combed top that is spun woolen method is considered semi-woolen.

Spin roving and rolags however you want - you'll get a soft, warm yarn. You can spin top or pin-carded roving woolen for a softer, warmer yarn, or spin it worsted for a smoother, harder- wearing yarn. If you're spinning combed or flicked fibers, spin them woolen for a warmer softer yarn or spin them worsted for smooth, hard-wearing yarns - but don't expect them to be as soft against the skin as any of your other options.

If this is still as clear as mud, try an experiment: Take a fiber and spin some worsted and some woolen, and see/feel the difference. If you're preparing a fiber from raw form, process a little bit woolen and a little worsted. Then split each in half, so that you're spinning half of the woolen preparation woolen and half worsted, and half of the worsted spun woolen and half spun worsted. Notice the differences in the 4 yarns you get. If you're feeling particularly adventurous, knit/crochet/weave up a sample of each and wash them vigorously a few times and see how the fiber feels after some wear - you may change your mind on how you want to process that particular fiber.

It is combining of the spinning method with the fiber preparation that produces the rare true woolen or true worsted thread - any fibers can be combed to produce a "top" that can be spun either worsted or semi-worsted. Most spinners fall somewhere in-between in the semi-worsted to semi-woolen categories, depending on how their fiber is prepared and how they spin it. So there, as far as I'm capable of explaining it in words, is "the deal" on the woolen vs. worsted thing - hope this helps!

Weft Faced (aka Stick) Weaving

Lady AElfgigu Falkenglen

Weft Faced (aka Stick) Weaving
by Lady AElfgifu Falkenglen

Weft Faced weaving has been around since pre-historic times. Most often it was used in making floor coverings. It is a matter of experimental archaeology that the method could have or would have been adapted to other purposes based on need and material availability.

While I have no specific documentation (yet) as to the origin of the weaving method, I strongly believe it to be possible and even probable. Some of the reasons for this are as follows:

People of the time and place which this piece represents would not necessarily have been inclined to waste materials.

While there has yet to be found an actual set of weaving sticks per se, there have been artifacts whose function is unclear which could be interpreted as just such a tool. Since the sticks were potentially made of wood, they would only have survived under very specific and ideal conditions. There is a part of the Skar boat find which presents partial wooden sticks with a small amount of textile remaining under what appear to be "end caps", which textile appears to be woven in a manner consistent with this method.

There are partial textiles on display whose selvages could be interpreted as having been stick woven, most notably one from the Oseberg find.

This was a portable weaving format which required very little to create and with a little thought and ingenuity could be used to create many different types and styles of textile.

There is evidence that on arrival in North America the Vikings traversed the Northwest Passage repeatedly over a great number of years and as such, inland waterways, by Viking nature, would have beckoned them southward possibly into what is now the United States Southwest Region. Since Vikings tended to interact, either favorably or not, with the indigenous people, it is possible to theorize that the Stick Weaving still practiced today by Native Americans may have been influenced by or even introduced by the Vikings.

I strongly believe that there are no new ideas under the sun and if I have thought of it, I'm certain someone (or several someones) down through the ages found different uses for the method.

Weft Faced (aka Stick) Weaving

Some of the items I believe this method was used to create beyond floor coverings are:

- Harnesses for farm animals
- Girth straps for horses
- Blankets for horses
- Cloaks or blankets for travelers/warriors/traders
- Blankets for home especially in colder climates/seasons
- Decorative trim in many widths and patterns (again only limited by imagination and materials)
- Cords for various uses including, but not limited to, Viking tool cords for women's dresses, securing of bundles, securing/field repair of armor.
- Insulation quilted between layers of material

That having been said, I have included a set of written instructions so that you have something to which you can refer

Stick Weaving Instructions

Cut your warp (lengthwise) yarn at least twice the length needed for your weaving plus the ends desired (tassels, braids, etc.) Draw the end of your warp yarn through the hole in the end of the stick to the mid point of these strands. Pull the ends even and tie the ends of the doubled warp yarns into a knot. Repeat this step on each stick you will use. The warp will not be seen unless it is used for fringe on the ends of your project

Line up your sticks side by side in your hand. Tie one end of the weft (the crosswise weaving) yarn to the first stick. (The one farthest from the ends of the fingers holding the sticks) Start wrapping yarn (the weft) over stick 1, under stick 2, over stick 3, and so on in a over/under process. Wrap the weft around the last stick, then under and over (the opposite of the previous row) until you are back at the starting point. Pull the yarn (snug but do not over tighten) at the end of each row.

As the weaving gets to the pointed end of the stick, don't try to push the material off the end of the stick with the warp. Take each stick and twist it gently, while pulling it forward. Do this about 1/2" at a time. In the process the beginning of your weaving will slide onto the warp threads.

Continue weaving, until you reach the length you need for the project. To finish, tie the end around the last stick.

Gently twist each stick, while pulling it forward, until all of the weaving is on the warp threads and you have enough warp thread for to finish the ends. Tie the warp threads to one another across each of the weaving. Finish off the ends by braiding, tying, making tassels, or weaving the warp back into the weave. You can also attach this to a buckle of some like item if you like.

Lady Aelfgifu of the Glen
Chatelaine, Shire of Riversedge
Kingdom of Aethelmearc

Couching—A Simple Way to Decotrate

By:Lady Katernia de Breacia

Couching - a Simple Way to Decorate

by Lady Katerina da Brescia.

Being an impatient person at heart, I learnt to sew in preference to knitting, as a child; it was much faster. So when faced with a method of decoration for my garb, I decided that embroidery was too slow. It was then I discovered couching.

Couching is a method of laying down threads or cord, and sewing it in place - usually for decorative purposes. It was the best way to use expensive materials to good value as most, or all, of the cord is visible.

It can be used for almost anytime period in the SCA. In 1250-1350 underside couching was more common but, by the middle of the 14th century, surface couching had taken over.

Underside couching involves taking the couching ribbon (often metallic strips, silk or linen cord) through the material, at stages, and sewing it on the underside (wrong side) of the material. Thus making the anchoring stitches invisible. This is technically more accurate for earlier garb. (If you want to be that accurate) I prefer surface couching as it is easier and I find that it is less likely to damage the material of your garb or project (I also do more Renaissance garb). Surface couching is the best way to lay thick threads or elaborate cording which is difficult to pass through material.

First:

Some projects/garb are best couched before any sewing is done. Others, such as doublets are best done after the outside layer is sewn, but before the lining is sewn to it. The lining will hide the end bits inside (more on this later).

Next:

The most difficult part of couching is transferring a pattern to your material as you don't really want to draw on the outside (front side) of the material; this is very difficult when working with velvet. There are several methods to do this:

1. Couch freehand without a pattern on the actual material. I would only recommend this if you are experienced in couching, embroidery or artistic.

It is also easier if your project is small.

2. Draw on the underside (wrong side) and carefully try to match this to the front stitching. This is very fiddly.

3. Draw the pattern on thin tissue paper. Sew over this and remove at the end of the project. This is a quick method but can damage stitching, when removing the paper, and can make the final decoration 'loose'.

4. Use either method 2 or 3 then tack-stitch, in a contrasting thread, over the outline of the pattern. (remove paper if you used method 3). Lay cord along the stitched pattern and remove tack-stitching as you go. I use this. Though it is time consuming (yes, I know I said I was impatient), it won't rub off and you are less likely to damage the decorative cord or material than removing a paper pattern. Also, as I often do bits of work, then leave it for a considerable time while I finish a more urgent project, it is less likely to cause staining of the material (if ink was used on the paper pattern, or to rub off as I work. In the end, for me, it saves me time.

Finally:

Couching is so simple- you can't lose your count and can always see where you are up to! I choose a finer, matching coloured thread that will not be obvious against the couching cord. An embroidery hoop is a good idea, particularly if working on velvet or work with a loose weave that may be distorted out of shape. Stretch the fabric so it is even in the hoop. Simply choose a decorative cord, lay it along the pattern, on the outside of the garb so it can be seen. With you matching thread, start on the back (wrong side) of your work.

To start with, the thicker, couching cord or ribbon is pulled through to the inside (wrong side) of your material or garb, in the place where your pattern starts, to the front. This can be done with a large needle or crochet hook. (I use a large needle). It is then sewn in place with the thinner thread.

Pass the thinner thread through to the front and make a simple, neat stitch over the couching cord and back to the underside, in approximately the same spot the thread came through from the back (follow me?). Work along the couching thread with small, even stitches, a few millimeters apart (the exact spacing will depend on the complexity of the pattern and what you want it to look like) until you have finished the design.

To finish, pull the thick couching cord back

Couching—A Simple Way to Decorate

through to the underside. When cutting the cord, leave a generous amount extra so it is less likely to pull through to the front. Stitch the end to hold it in place, with the thinner thread. If the cord is likely to unravel, I usually tie a knot in it as well. Be warned though, a knot will be obvious with reasonably thick cord or thinner materials. Another method is recommended in this case.

Really, couching is so simple that even an impatient person, such as myself, can be motivated to decorate my garb! If you can do simple hand-stitching (and are neat) you can couch!!!

(And no couching is not named for the fact that you can do it while sitting on your couch in front of the TV. I believe it is from the French, coucher, meaning to lay)

Examples of couching I have done, can be found on my website:

http://katerina.n3.net

For examples of really nice Anglo-saxon techniques and different forms of couching, try:

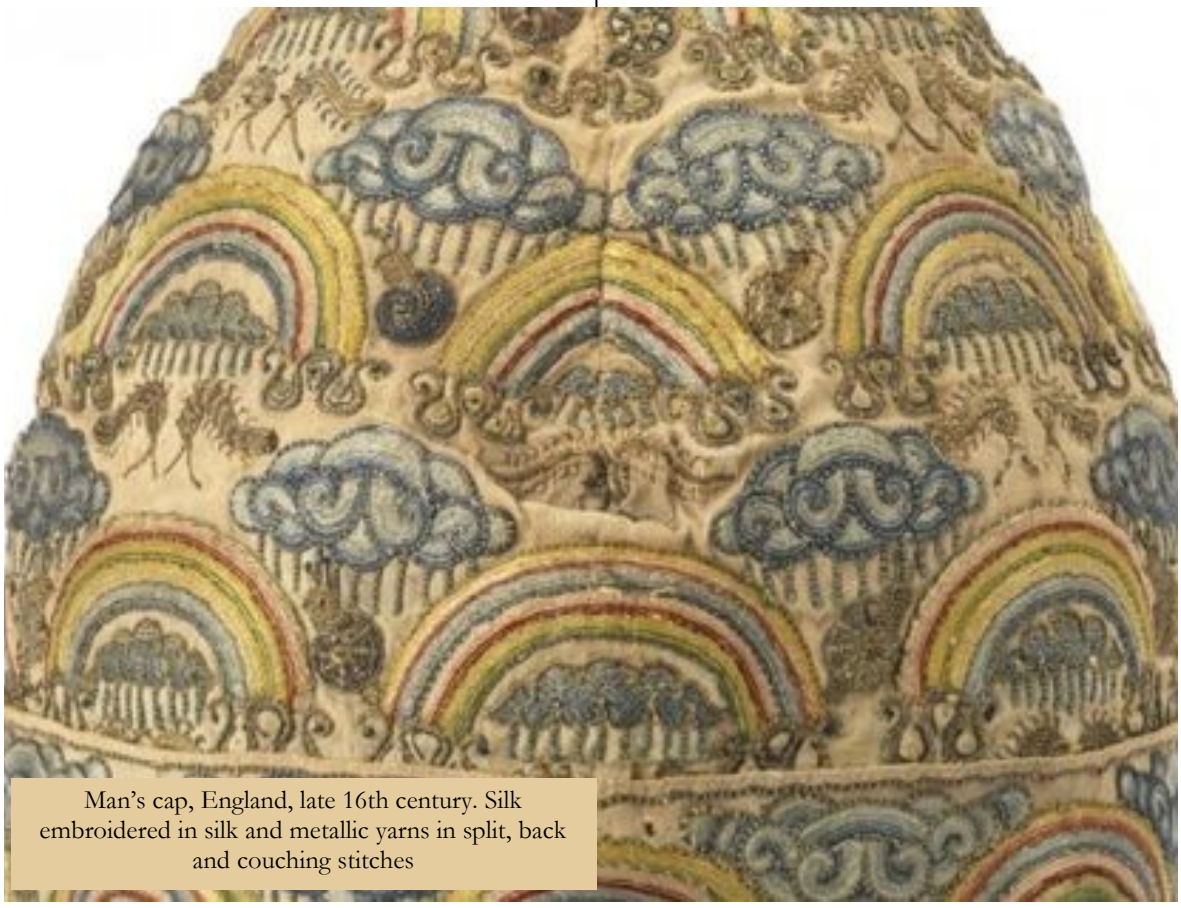
http;//www.regia.org/life/emboid.htm

and take a good look at the Bayeux tapestry some time, it is worked in laid and couched stitching of wool, on linen.

More about Lady Katerina da Brescia.

Katerina lives in Innilgard (Adelaide) in the Principality of Lochac (Australia), - soon to become Kingdom. She used to be a Privateer, made her fortune, met a handsome, younger man, retired and got married. She now lives the life of a noble and does not have enough time for all of her interests (especially while looking after her eleven-month old child): garb making, alligraphy and illumination, drawing, researching, archery.... always finding something else of interest to do... She is currently protege to Mistress Aislinn de Valence, head of the household Casa Viola, has just stepped down as Baronial Arts and Sciences Officer of Innilgard, has served as Rapier Mashall in years passed (now retired due to injury), and A&S Officer of local Canton.

Karen Carlisle is an Optometrist, now working part-time after returning from maternity leave, with not enough time or all of her interests!



Man's cap, England, late 16th century. Silk embroidered in silk and metallic yarns in split, back and couching stitches

A Stitch in Time

By: Bantianrna Brighid ingheam Chonchobhair uinheill

A Stitch in Time?

by Bantiarna Brighid ingheam Chonchhobhair uinheill

On a recent episode of Robin Hood on BBC America, Maid Marian stitched Robin's wounded arm with a metal sewing needle retrieved from her sewing supplies. Was that action historically accurate? Would the average seamstress in Medieval England even possess a metal sewing needle?

The answer is "Probably not". While needles made of metal were available in some parts of the world during the period of time covered by the SCA, they weren't readily available in Europe during this time. Needles used in Medieval Europe were primarily made of bone or wood.

The Romans had used bronze and ivory needles. It is believed the credit for the art of manufacturing steel needles goes to either China or India. During the Abbassid Era (750-1258), according to www.nature.com/news/specials/islamandscience/timeline/index.html) Arabs carried on extensive trade to obtain metals. They imported iron alloy and crafted various items, including needles. In 641 C.E. the Arabs captured Alexandria, and acquired a vast library of medical writings. These writings were then carried into Spain.

In the fifteenth century the Arabs were driven out of Spain, taking with them most of their collection of books. By this time the Arabs had mastered the art of needle making and the art of using those needles in surgery, and they began trading the needles with people in different parts of Europe. The Arabs kept the art of making steel needles a secret until 1650. Steel needle making in England began soon afterwards. At first the needles were made by hand, thereby making it a laborious process. Later, machinery was invented which allowed the manufacture of large volumes of needles in less time, thereby making steel needles more accessible to the average seamstress.

While steel needles were made for centuries throughout Asia and the Middle East, they were used primarily for surgery, and not generally available to the average seamstress in Medieval Europe until well into the Seventeenth century. Even though BBC America's version had Robin fighting for the Crown in the Crusades, which seems to fly in the face of most common Robin Hood tales, it's doubtful he or Maid Marian would have possessed a steel sewing needle in Twelfth century England.

Sources:

- http://www.alshindagah.com/janfeb2006/history.html
- www.nature.com/news/specials/isiamandscience/timeline/index.html

Camilla Rupp is married to Jeff and is a mother of three unique kids. She works as a legal secretary.

Her persona, Bantiarna Brighid ingheam Chonchhobhair uinheill, is living in Tulaigh Mhor, Ireland, in the mid Fourteen century.

A Way to Make Sewing Needles

By: HL Suzanna the herbalist

This article was first published in December 2001, issue 10 of "The MoAS", the Minister of Arts and Sciences Newsletter of Atenveldt.

A Way to Make Sewing Needles

by HL Suzanna the herbalist

I am used to working with wire to make jewelry, and it seemed like it would be fun to make my own needles. This is how I did it, and some alternative suggestions. Most or all the tools and supplies should be available at a good hardware store. or possibly an auto parts store.

I use 18 gauge copper or brass wire, which you should be able to find at the hardware store. I have also used 20 gauge, but it is even thinner and harder to work with. Iron wire could also be used, but it will rust.

I cut the wire into needle lengths with a hammer and a cold chisel (intended to cut soft metals), which is the period method. Wire cutters would be easier.

Then I hammered one end of the wire flat. A small ball-peen or regular hammer works well. It is better if the face of the hammer is nice and smooth. You also need a piece of heavier metal to hammer against - scrap steel or brass works, railroad rail, or a proper anvil. Again, it is better if it is nice and smooth. When you are hammering, be sure to hit the wire with the hammer. If you miss and hit the anvil with the hammer, you will get dents in your anvil.

As the wire gets flatter, it also gets thinner. This is the end for the eye of the needle. I used a punch to punch a small hole, and then used a reamer (a small tapered square steel tool, which may be hard to find) to enlarge the hole. Sometimes this splits the eye so the needle can't be used. A better idea is to use a very small drill to drill the hole. I haven't been able to document such small drill bits in period, though. A friend of mine who makes tools made me a small punch to use in making the holes in the needles.

After the eye is made in the wire, the next step is to make the point. I start by hammering the other end of the wire mostly flat, like I did for the eye end. Then I use a file (common file from the hardware store) to file it down. Then hammer some more, then file some more, then hammer, until you get a nice sharp point. The repeated hammering strengthens the metal (which is called work-hardening) and removes the file marks so the needle is smooth.

Once you have a nice sharp point, you may want to smooth the needle down with sandpaper. Use wet and dry sandpaper (the black kind) in 400 grit (fine) then 600 grit (very fine). If you can't find this at the hardware store, an auto parts place will probably have it. Now you have a needle to use. I would suggest making several, with slightly varying lengths and eye holes.

You should find these work well for most embroidery on most fabrics (possibly not on very sheer or very heavy fabrics). I find that stitches that are worked from top to underside, then back up, like couching, seem to be a bit easier with these needles than running stitches that I am used to working only from the top side, like chain stitch. Possibly there is a reason couching was a popular technique in period?

I use the Dover publication of Theophilus' work "On Divers Arts" for most of my documentation for metal working techniques, and Groves book "A History of Needlework Tools and Accessories" for documentation of needles. You can probably find other information if you look.

Have fun with your needles.

Suzanna
Barony of the Steppes
Kingdom of Ansdteorra

The Period Embroidery Frame

By: Bannthegn Alianora da Lysharet

The Period Embroidery Frame

by Bannthegn Alianora da Lyshåret

While it is possible to embroider on loose cloth, the process is very awkward and will lead to puckering and distortion of the stitches. From the earliest times, the needleworker has fitted her ground fabric into a tautening frame.

I was taught my first simple embroidery stitches by my grandmother when I was a little girl. Like most modern needleworkers, I began with the modern ring frame, or embroidery hoop. As I became more skilled and interested in fine needlework, I moved on to rectangular frames, which were much more satisfactory in terms of tautness and lack of fabric distortion.

I've been interested in period techniques and tools for 3 decades, looking into the subject willy-nilly as I researched medieval embroidery. I've been able to find masses of material on the general subject (Especially during the past 10-15 years. In my early SCA career [1970 and on] there was very little information readily available.), especially books and articles dealing with fibers and stitch technique. I've found the search for information on pre-1600 needlework equipment very frustrating. It's a subject sometimes glossed over (References to frames, but no description.) and mostly ignored. There are a few books that deal with needlework tools and accessories, but their authors seem to believe that needlework history began somewhere between 1680 and 1850.

So, it was on to other sources of information. Period commission and guild accounts describe fabrics, fibers, gems and metals distributed to embroiderers, but I've never found a reference to an embroidery frame, apart from guild cautions to embroiderers to be certain that their fabric is tautly mounted. My assumption is that the embroiderers always provided their own frames, making them irrelevant to the accountants. Cennini describes a method of painting embroidery motifs in ink onto fabric mounted in stretcher frames. This is the sum total of my results so far.

I've been left with three other resources: 1) Extant objects; 2) Period art; and 3) Common sense "practical archaeology".

1) I had the good fortune to spend three weeks in England in the mid-nineties. Though it was no exhaustive medieval needlework tour of Europe, I was able to see quite a number of period pieces, most at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. There were no actual period stretcher frames on display, though there were some later period "Slate" frames on display. I was fortunate enough to happen upon an under-curator, who described the standard earlier period frame as a simple rectangle of soft wood, similar to the modern stretcher frame. Though there are some fragments at the Museum of London (I didn't see them there, but they are supposed to have them), no whole frames still existed in England to her knowledge. (I would be thrilled to hear from anyone who might have a reference to surviving medieval stretcher frames.)

2) My survey of period art hasn't come up with much, either. It seems that while the product was highly valued, the process wasn't much romanticized or often deemed a fit subject for art during the period. Just about every portrayal I have found is definitely late in our period. The embroiderer seems to have become a more interesting subject in the post period, with a number of pictures and engravings existing from the 17th Century.

The general result: All of the frames portrayed are rectangular wood of two basic styles: 1) The "Stretcher" style, a butted, square cornered frame, possibly fitted by combed or toothed ends as are the modern versions, and 2) The "Slate" style, in which the pieces are fitted crossing at the corners, either by pegging or by means of a hole in the vertical pieces through which the horizontal bars are fitted.

The fabric is mounted into these frames in two ways: First, and most commonly shown, the ground fabric of a smaller size than the frame is sewn into the frame with whipped stitches between the edge of the frame and the edge of the fabric. The other method is to fasten the edge of a piece of ground fabric larger than the frame into the frame using tacks.

3) Given what little hard information I have yet been able to find, some of my conclusions and most of my interpretations are based on my own experiences in embroidery. Working the same themes, with the same stitches, on the same or similar ground fabrics, using the same fibers, I think I have a good feel for the process as my medieval

The Period Embroidery Frame

counterpart would have experienced it.

First, a rectangular frame is absolutely necessary to achieve the tautness of ground fabric necessary for fine embroidery. Ideal is a rectangular frame held by a stand of some sort, allowing the needleworker to work with both hands, and to use the "under and over" technique necessary for perfect stitch placement. (The best result in embroidery is achieved by plunging the needle under the surface and coming up from underneath on each stitch. There are a few exceptions of stitches that can be worked well entirely on the surface, but only a few.) Period needleworkers are portrayed using trestles to support their larger frames, and leaning stands for smaller versions. A small frame can be held in the hand, and except for couched metal work, I have found this more convenient for frames smaller than 8 inches square.

Mounting the ground fabric: Most of the illustrations show the ground fabric whipped into a larger frame. In spite of this, I have found this method far less satisfactory than mounting larger fabric with tacks. This is the only way to get a drum taut fabric surface, and one must have such a taut surface when doing metalwork. My interpretation is that economics and other practicalities played a role in the mounting choices. First, the medieval craftsman could only own so many different lengths of finished wood, and the size of the objects commissioned would probably vary far more than the frame pieces available. The whipped mounting allows more flexibility.

Second, is the fact that sometimes the embroiderers were working on finished garments or pieces thereof, rather than on whole cloth. The whipping method of mounting is less damaging to the edges of fabric than tacking, thus preserving the precious textiles. Thirdly, constantly tacking into a piece of wood will damage it, eventually destroying its ability to hold another tack. My interpretation is that the tacking method may have been reserved for metalwork embroidery.

As a modern needleworker, I have the luxury of being able to waste the edges of my fabric, and to afford to have a large selection of frame sides in every needful size, and the ability to replace them when too holed to hold another tacking. On the rare occasions that I do work on finished garments or pattern pieces, I have modern, non-damaging plastic frames such as the Q-snap available to me. Therefore, I use the tacking method exclusively when working with whole cloth.

There are two other types of frame common with the modern needleworker, the scroll frame and the ring frame. Though I have seen late period and slightly post-period depictions of embroiderers using what seems to be a scrolled fabric frame, these were very late period and very large pieces. I have, as yet, found no period references to them, and my current belief is that they were, in fact, limited to large pieces and the late portion of our period. I base that on my own experiences with trying to execute period embroidery techniques using a scroll frame, which is much more conducive to canvas work (needlepoint) and quilting.

The ring frame or hoop, is made up of two rings of either wood or metal, in which mounting is achieved by placing the fabric over the smaller ring, and then placing the larger ring around the fabric and smaller ring. The wooden version is tightened by means of a screw set into the outer ring, and the metal version is automatically tightened be means of a spring. I had, for many years, simply assumed that the wooden ring embroidery frame was a period tool. It is often portrayed in movies and novels with pre-1600 European settings, and it's very simplicity argued for its early use.

Surprisingly, I have yet to find a single description of, or reference to, a ring embroidery frame in Europe in our period. The earliest mention I have found of round or ring frames comes with the introduction of tambour work in the late 17th or early 18th Centuries.

In my own experience with fine embroidery I abandoned the use of the ring frame many years ago, as it was more a hindrance than a help in my work. A ring frame cannot hold fabric taut enough, is more difficult to set in a stand, wrinkles, distorts, and often soils the ground fabric, and must constantly be rearranged and tightened. A ring frame is really only usable when working from the surface only, in which case a looser hold can be helpful. Given my experience I seriously doubt that medieval embroiderers would have found a ring frame any more useful. (Lady Katherine of Cate Hall has suggested that another reason for the absence of ring frames is the possible difficulty of bending the proper thicknesses of wood,

which might require later steam technology. Neither of us know much about period woodworking, so any enlightenment would be welcome.)

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Some online period embroidery resources:

- The Bayeux Tapestry http://www.sjolander.com/viking/museum/bt/bt.htm
- Regia http://www.regia.org/embroid.htm
- Medieval/Renaissance Embroidery Homepage http://www.advancenet.net/~jscole/medembro.html
- Viking Embroidery Stitches and Motifs http://www.cs.vassar.edu/~capriest/vikembroid.html
- Atlantia Embroidery and Needlework Links http://moas.atlantia.sca.org/topics/embr.htm

- Photo of Staniland's. Embroiderers shows embroiderers working at an upright rectangular frame. http://www.medievalbookstore.com/embroiderers.htm

An Introduction to Wools

By: Maistreas Siobhan nic Dhuinnshleibhe, OL

An Introduction to Wool

by Maistreas Siobhan nic Dhuinnshleibhe, OL

Wool is an animal-based protein, or keratin, fiber. Under the microscope, a single hair of wool is slightly elliptical in shape and covered with a layer of overlapping scales that point towards the end of the fiber. Long wool breeds tend to have long, thin scales that barely overlap, giving these fibers a smooth and shiny appearance. Fine wools have an irregular surface that does not reflect light as well, making it a more non-lustrous fiber. These scales act to direct dirt and moisture away from a sheep's body, but they also play an important in wool shrinkage and felting. In general, finer wools feel softer and wear less well compared with coarser wools.

Although wool is the weakest as an individual fiber when compared to individual fibers of silk, cotton or linen, it is a very strong and durable fiber when spun and woven. Its remarkable springiness and elasticity allows its fibers to be folded or bent repeatedly without breaking. With its rough surface scales and natural crimp, it traps air well and allows for a high degree of warmth. Wool can also absorb up to 1/3 its weight in moisture without feeling damp to the touch. It is also naturally flame resistant and will not flare or continue to burn once the flame source is removed – most synthetics will not only continue to burn, but they will often melt and/or smolder for hours.

Sheep fleeces can vary in length, color, diameter and curl/crimp pattern just as much as human hair. Just as one hairstyle does not look equally good on everyone, no one wool can be used equally well for every purpose that utilizes wool. Different breeds of sheep have wool with different characteristics, including thickness of the individual hairs, curl, texture and color. Therefore it helps to know about a variety of fleece characteristics and types so that you can get the best balance between the intended project and the wool you want to use.

Type of Wool & Fineness Classification

Wool can come in an incredible variety of thicknesses and textures. There are two primary systems used to classify the fineness of wool: micron count (indicated by) which is a physical measurement of the average diameter of a fleece in thousands of a millimeter; and wool quality numbers which are a subjective assessment based on the maximum number of 560-yard skeins that can be spun from one pound of combed wool top. Micron counts are mainly used in Australia and New Zealand. The lower the micron number, the finer the fleece is. Wool quality numbers, which are also known as spinning count or Bradford count, is used in the United States and Britain. In this system, the higher the quality number, the finer the fleece.

Fine wools are usually distinguished by their low average fiber diameters (33-17 or 50s -90s) which means that they will feel softer than other wool types. Most of the fine wool breeds are the result of one or more of these breeds having been crossed at one or more points with merino sheep in attempts to create sheep with better meat production while still capable of producing a high-quality fleece of fine wool. The fleeces are medium to large in size, weighing between 9-13 pounds, and the staple length ranges between 3-5 inches long. The crimp of these breeds is very close, giving them excellent elasticity and bounce. These fleeces are often chosen to be combined with exotic fibers like silk, cashmere and angora to add bounce and elasticity without affecting the natural softness of the yarns. The lanolin in these wools tends to be very waxy and difficult to remove, and is often quite heavy- resulting in substantial weight loss of the fleece during washing. These fibers are usually prepared and spun worsted into a smooth yarn with a bright finish, or spun woolen into a soft, bouncy yarn. When made into cloth, fine wools have a very soft handle, feel and drape. These fibers also tend to felt very easily, so extra care must be used when washing these fleeces.

Long wools have a longer average fiber diameter, making them durable and hard-wearing but not as soft to the touch as the fine wools. Long wools range in diameters from medium to coarse (32-40 or 36s-48s) which makes them suitable for outerwear garments, carpets, upholstery, and other household fabrics. These wools tend to be lustrous or semi-lustrous, with a wavy crimp pattern and a medium to long staple ranging from 5-9 inches, but occasionally as long as 12 inches. Most of these breeds have a moderate lanolin content, but can be easily washed without the special care required by fine wools to prevent

felting. Longwool fleeces can be prepared in a variety of states from worsted to woolen, but are most frequently combed, flicked or drum carded to make strong, lustrous yarns that wear well. Breeds of longwool sheep in this book include: Border Leceister, Cotswald, Dartmoor, English Leceister,

Down-type wools come from sheep breeds that are bred primarily for meat production, but their wools usually have a well-developed spiral crimp that makes them very elastic, springy and crush resistant. Down breed fleeces range in diameter from fine to medium and have a staple length between 2-4 inches long. Because these fleeces usually have a shorter staple, they are usually spun woollen and produce a full, round yarn. These wools tend to have a luster-less, more matte finish than long or fine wools, but the crimp contributes to the elastic, bulky, and resilient qualities inherent in yarn or cloth made from these fleeces. Some of these breeds tend to grow colored or kemp fibers in their wool, which makes them ideal for use in tweeds, sweaters, socks, blankets, and outerwear garment fabrics. These wools have only a moderate grease content and are not prone to felting, so no special care in washing is required. Washing will cause the crimp to curl up more, leaving your staple slightly shorter than it was in the grease. Because of the wide variety in staple length, shorter fleeces can be hand or drum-carded, but the longer staples can be flicked or combed for more worsted yarns. Combed yarns will have a greater durability than carded yarns, but both will have a great degree of bounce and elasticity. Down breeds in this book include: Black Welsh Mountain, Cheviot, Dorset, Norfolk Horn, Portland, Shetland, Welsh Mountain Badger Face,

Double-coated wools come from sheep that had evolved and established themselves long before our modern wool breeds were developed. They are extremely hardy and an live in harsher environments with meager pasturage. Their longer, hairy outer coat sheds rain and snow while their shorter, fine undercoat provides an excellent layer of insulation against the skin. The outer coat usually has no crimp or only a slight wave, but the inner coat will have crimp proportional to its fineness. These breeds com in a variety of colors and fiber diameters, so it is difficult to classify these breeds according to fiber diameter. While the undercoats can be quite fine, the coarseness of the outer coats often limits the use of these wools. Most of these breeds contain little lanolin that does not require a great degree of care in washing, but treat the fibers gently if you want to combine both inner and outer coats together in your project, as extensive handling may start separating the fibers. To prepare them together hand or drum carding is ideal, as it will allow the yarn to shed moister while providing warmth. You can comb or flick the fibers to separate them into the two different coats, then the outer coat can be spun into strong, hard-wearing yarns and the inner coat can be spun into soft, lofty yarns or blended with other fibers. Double-coated breeds include: Icelandic, Karakul, Navajo-Churro, Scottish Blackface, Spaelsau.

An Introduction to Wools

An Introduction to Wools

Hair (as opposed to wool) comes from sheep breeds that originated in the tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world where they adapted to thrive in warm climates. These sheep shed their fiber each year, and are raised almost exclusively for their meat. The wool tends to be very short, coarse and hairy. Breeds of this type include the Wiltshire Horn

Primitive breeds of sheep and feral breeds of sheep also produce fiber. Primitive breeds of sheep represent an intermediary step between the first domesticated sheep and modern breeds, and have survived where many other breeds either died out or were bred to exhibit different characteristics. For example, the Soay breed is thought to have descended from sheep domesticated in the Stone Age, and the Orkney may be the remnants of domesticated sheep from the Iron Age. Feral sheep descend from domesticated animals that escaped or were released and adapted to environmental pressures and their isolated status, thus regaining their primitive characteristics over time. These breeds have short, fine wooly coat intermixed with hair or kemp fibers that are predominately colored and tend to molt their fiber annually. Many of these breeds are very rare, and have thus found a niche in the specialty wool industry. Breeds of these types include: Manx Loghtan, Orkney, Soay.

Wool Preperation

Wool that is prepared for spinning or is already spun into yarn is classified as either worsted or woolen. This is determined not only by the type of wool, but also by how it's prepared and spun.

"Worsted" designates yarns that are prepared from long fibers of similar length that lie parallel together - meaning that worsted preparations are usually done to fine wools or long wools, and rarely if ever to down-type or double-coated wools. Worsted preparations are combed in order to remove the shorter hairs and align the fibers in a parallel direction, known to spinners as "top." Worsted wools, when spun into yarn, are very strong and smooth, have a bright sheen when spun from a lustrous fleece, tend to wear better than their woolen counterparts, but are not as warm.

"Woolen" designates yarns that are prepared from fibers that are carded together so that the shorter and longer fibers are blended together evenly. They do usually not lie parallel to each other and are usually spun at a right angle to their place in the fiber preparation, which is known as "roving." Spinning at a right angle to the fibers allows the fibers to be jumbled together, thus trapping as much air space as possible between the fibers. Woolen yarns are lofty, warmer and have more bounce than their worsted counterparts, but tend to fill and fuzz with wear.

In addition to worsted and woolen preparations, there are several intermediate combinations of preparing and spinning the fibers. Semi-worsted preparations can include wool that has been flicked while still in lock form prior to spinning so that both long and short fiber are still present, but all the fibers are lying parallel to each other. Carding on a drum carder is also a semi-worsted preparation, since the constant rotation of the fibers being brushed around the drum tends to align them more than as if they were prepared on handcards. Semi-woolen preparations usually involve fibers that have been carded on handcards, or top that is spun folded over the fingers to form a triangle so that the yarn has a more woolen structure.

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Making 16th Century Bobbin Lace

By: Mistress Francesca la Curiosa

Making 16th Century Bobbin Lace

(the very basics to get you started and by no means complete!)

a handout by Mistress Francesca la Curiosa, m.k.a. Muir Dean

Remember:You make lace to look good. There are no extant explanations of how to work the prickings from the 16th century. Use your own judgement! Forget right and wrong. They tend to scare people too much! This is only a beginning into lace making. Warning lace making is addictive and there are many financial pitfalls associated with this craft J !!!

What you need:

Pillow - a surface on which to work; see description of the possibilities

Pricking - a pattern to follow; these would have been made of leather or parchment in the 1500ís and the lines would not have been drawn on them; there would be only a pattern of tiny holes!

Bobbins - the "sticks" or "bones" on which you wind your thread - 2 pair per braid

Thread - In the 1500ís this would have meant linen or silk; cotton was rarer and harder to spin fine enough for lace with its short fibers

Pins - these secure your threads to the pattern while you work the lace - by tradition and no other reason they are brass - stainless steal does the job just as well but doesnít turn color the way the brass ones do

Scissors - nice sharp ones that are fine enough to get down very close and cut cleanly. A fine pair of embroidery scissors is a big plus.

Accessory possibilities (helpful tools, suggestions, luxuries):

Pricker - a tool with which to prepare your pricking (Use of this tool results in fewer bent pins especially if you work with the brass ones!)

Beeswax - to make your pricker glide more smoothly (no off color remarks please!)

Pin cushion - one that pins to your pillow is very helpful as there is less fumbling for the pins whilst working

Bobbin winder - luxury! - When there are many bobbins to wind this device is coveted.

Cover Cloth - to keep your work clean between times you work your lace; they are also useful when you are working on a pattern that loops back on itself; you can cover the pins youíve already placed, and your threads wonít get caught on them.

Making a Pricking:

In the 1500s a pricking would have been made of leather, cherished and not shared. There would have been holes in the leather but no lines drawn between them. Alternatively they could have been made of parchment. I have not the patience to make such a pricking for each student. I photocopy the pricking onto cardstock or white paper. If the copy is on plain paper I back it with a piece of a manila folder and cover the whole with clear contact paper. A blue tinted contact paper is also available through the vendors, but Iíd rather spend the money on new bobbins or tools.

You prepare a pricking by piercing holes in all the places the lines cross (and therefore where the braids cross) and on the side away from the braid line of all the small circles (which is where the picots will be.) It is best to do this on a surface other than your pillow as pricking on the pillow makes the holes a bit less stable.

Winding Bobbins:

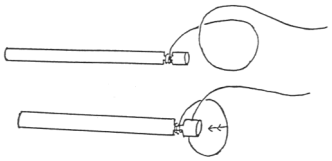
Bobbins should always be wound in the same direction. I wind mine by holding the bobbin in my left hand, holding the thread in place along the shaft with my thumb and wrapping with my right hand from the underside over the top. I always do it this way. When you mix directions you spend more time trying to figure out how to get more thread off of the bobbin than is necessary. It significantly increases the frustration level!

To secure your thread to the bobbin once you've wound enough thread on it, you must make a lace knot. There are several "lace knots" so here is the first one. Make a loop with the thread in your right hand and slip that loop over the head of the bobbin with the tail end caught to the bobbin with the loop. Demonstration several times was the only way I learned this. If your thread is tending to slip, then a double wrap of the knot is useful.

Making 16th Century Bobbin Lace

Dressing your pillow:

This means getting your pillow ready to make lace. Pin the pricking to your pillow pushing these pins all the way into the pillow so they will not get in the way of your lace making.



Set pins in the beginning holes of your pricking, 2 pairs for each braid (4 bobbins), 4 pair for each 2 braids, etc.

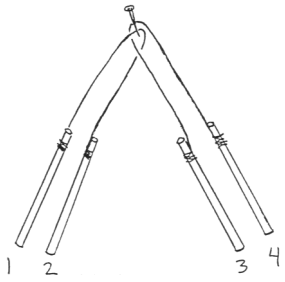
Hang the bobbins on the pins. Try to remember to interlock the threads at this point so that they remain secure and open when the pin is removed.

Starting a pricking:

Braid each 2 pair to the first place it crosses another braid or where there is a picot. Donít forget that if you have more than one braid starting at a pin you must make sure the strings cross so then will stay connected once the pin is removed. (This can be done with 4 pair as well. Think of each of these bobbins as a pair.)

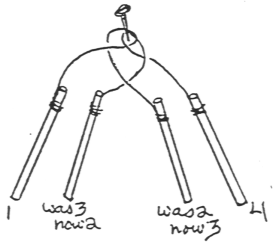
What is braiding:

Start by thinking of each of the bobbins in a braid as numbered 1,2,3,4 with 1 being on the left and counting across in the same direction that you read. A braid is a series of stitches called "cross" and "twist" repeated until the braid is the correct length which is judged by sight. The bobbins are always 1,2,3,4 in relation to one another, but they change their number after each stitch. For example, in a cross the #2 bobbin becomes #3 and #3 becomes #2.



Cross:

Place bobbin 2 over bobbin 3 (to the right) and readjust to even spacing. For your first cross and for those immediately after a pin, you do not need to tighten. However after crosses following a twist you will want to tighten the braid to make it lie flat.

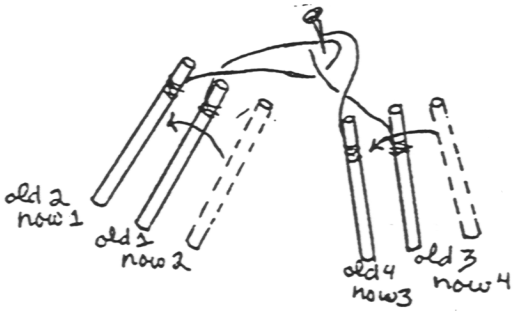


Twist:

Place bobbin 4 over bobbin 3, and place bobbin 2 over bobbin 1 and readjust to even spacing. You want to end your braid before a pin with a cross as this will make the hole around the pin a crisp one and fuller when the pin is removed. Personal preference: Although you can tighten at this point, it is not a good idea as this is more abrasive to the thread than after a cross and more difficult to make the braid lie flat.

Four pair cross (or crossing another braid):

When 2 braids meet and cross, you are faced with 8 rather than 4 pair. Treat each pair of bobbins as a single, numbered 1,2,3 and 4. Cross the 2 pair over the 3 pair to the right. Twist the 4 pair over the 3 pair and the 2 pair over the 1 pair. Place a pin in the hole where the braids cross. Cross the 2 pair over the 3 pair to close the pin. Continue each braid individually as you started before.

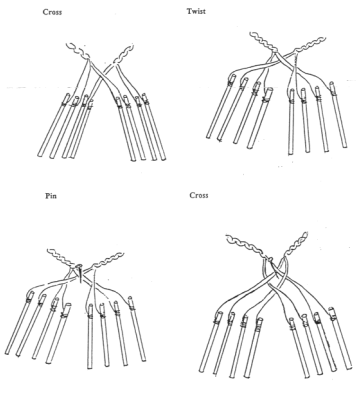


The Picot:

For either picot you use one pair of bobbins on the side of the braid which will have the picot. (A picot is a small loop that decorates the braid and makes it more fussy J)

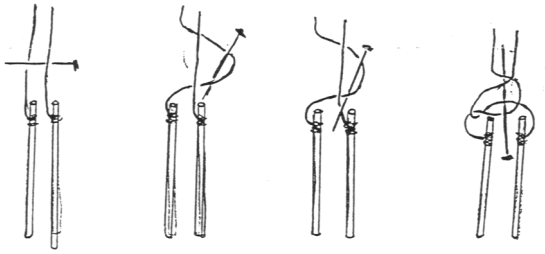
The single thread picot:

For a heavier thread (up to about 50/2) one thread around the picot is plenty. Using a pin in one hand and the pair of bobbins in the other, take the point of the pin under the thread on the outside and over the thread on the inside. Pull the far thread under the closer one. Take the point of the pin which now has a



Making 16th Century Bobbin Lace

loop of thread on it over the head of the close bobbin and down between the pair of bobbins. (This is below triangle of thread created from the first step.) Flip (slowly at first) the pin head towards you and the point away from you until the point comes up between the threads above your triangle and put the point of the pin the hole for the picot. This requires practice for most people as the movement and dexterity of the stitch is a bit awkward.



The double thread picot (for thinner threads):

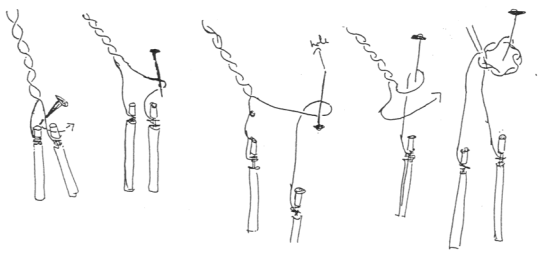
For finer thread you will want 2 threads forming the picot around the pin. Begin by twisting the pair of bobbins on the side of the lace closes to the picot 6 times. Take a pin's point under the thread closest to the picot and move the point down and over the top of the bobbin who's thread you are manipulating so there is now a loop of thread on the pin. Place the pin in the hole. DO NOT TIGHTEN. Pick up the other bobbin in this twisted pair and move it around the pin in the same direction, allowing the twist to follow it so that you now have 2 twisted threads around the bobbin. Tighten it down and twist 2 more times. Continue with the braid.

Ending your lace:

Another lace knot. This is basically a square knot. You use each pair of bobbins as one and tie left over right and then right over left. Cut the threads off close.

You can also just make long braids and tie them in a single knot.

I confess to using fray check on my end knots for my own sanity and lack of bravery. There are many ways to do this, I am sure, but this is what I've done in my 4+ years of making lace.



When you break a thread:

Do not panic. This does happen. Also if you do long tapes of the lace, your bobbins will run out. Just wind or have wound a bobbin. Knot the end of the thread to a pin place in the pillow (not the pricking) and run the thread along the path it wound be taking and continue working. If it is a bobbin that has run out of thread, tie the new bobbin to the old one for an inch or so to make the lace stronger before throwing the old bobbin out of the work.

Pillows:

For my classes I make pillows out of 1" insulation board cut into 18" squares, glued into a 2" thickness (to make sure the pins can be pushed all the way in and not come out the other side) and covered with cloth which I pin on. This should get you through until you become hooked. The next step up are the ethofoam cookie pillows, because they are light and I like to take my pillows with me. My favorite stand is a drum stand as it folds to nothing and travels well. Of course I have a plethora of other sorts that stay at home and I never have just one project going. Traditional pillows would have been stuffed with chopped straw or layered wool. The only picture Iíve found of a 1500ís pillow is the block print on the cover of the New Model Book. (see copy in handout). Bolster or ball shaped pillows were a probably shape for pillows as well. Block pillows are a very useful form of pillow but a much later invention.

Cookie Pillow: Round and flat like a pizza only a bit domed to allow the bobbins weight to keep the tension on the thread. These come in sizes from 12" to 24"+ in diameter. 20" is a good size if youíre getting your first pillow.

Bolster - just like a bolster pillow youíd find on a bed or a couch, long and round like a tube, some of them are actually hollow. The lace is usually yardage (long strips of lace like trim) and the pattern wrapped around the pillow allows you to take the pins from the back and use them again as you move down the pattern. The lace then comes off of the back and is usually caught in a pocket or wrapped around a lace tidy (stick with either

pin holes to keep it from rolling off, or ribbon or elastic to keep it secure.)

Block pillow - a pillow whose center comes out in blocks allowing you to move the direction you are working, or distance from the lace to the edge of the pillow, making room for bobbins. (Most useful if you want to own only one pillow. Beggarís Lace has an ethofoam one you cover yourself which isnít too pricey as lace things go.)

Roller pillow - a pillow with a roller at the back or in the center on which you work yardage, some of the rollers are conical to make curved yardage. There are lots of variations of this type depending on the origin of the pillow.

Bobbins:

I like bobbins that have a separate place to put your lace knot so that the thread does not bind into the rest of the wound thread. I donít enjoy spending time fussing with releasing more thread. Iíd rather be making lace. Kliot bobbins, the ones in the kits, are such bobbins. Otherwise the bobbins with a separate notch in which to tie your lace knot are Midlands or English bobbins or a much later invention, some of the square bobbins. Midlands bobbins generally have spangles (a ring of beads) at the end and are quite thin. Continental bobbins are the ones that have a wider base of wood and generally do not have a separation for the lace knot. Each requires a different hand posture. Each have evolved for a different kind of lace. Traditionalists use the correct bobbin for the type of lace they are making.

A short list of source technique books:

From the 1500's:

- *Le Pompe 1559 Patterns for Venetian Bobbin Lace*. by Santina M. Levey and Patricia C. Payne Bedford, England: Ruth Bean, 1983. ISBN 0-903585-16-2
  (Unfortunately currently out of print)
- *The New Model Book* republished as *Fascinating Bobbin Lace, Patterns from the first book of bobbin lace to be printed*. by Clair Burchard. Stuttgart: Haupy, 1986. ISBN 3-258-03610-1
  (wait until youíre sure youíre hooked - $75 or more)

Modern Technique books: (I have seen both of these at Borders Bookstores and Barnes and Nobles from time to time so they can be ordered from your local store.)

- *The Torchon Lace Workbook* by Bridget Cook New York: St. Martinís Press, 1989. ISBN 0-312-02119-4 (~ $20)
- *Practical Skills in Bobbin Lace* by Bridget M. Cook New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1987. ISBN 0-486-24461-1

Modern Lace Groups:

- International Old Lacers, Inc. (IOLI)
  Box 554
  Flanders, New Jersey, 07836.
  USA
  Membership: 3rd class $19.00, 1st class $27.50 (1999)
  http://members.aol.com/iolinc/ioli.html

Internet cites (there are bunches of these, but you can get there from here):

- http://www.arachne.com - started by a member of Arachneís Web in the East Kingdom, but really deals with all sorts of laces, not just pre-1600
- http://www.laceguild.demon.co.uk/ (the UKís Lace Guild)

Embroidery: Eight Period Stitches

Mistress Ealasaid nic Shuibhne

Embroidery: Eight Period Stitches

Method of construction and a brief history of each stitch

by Mistress Ealasaid nic Shuibhne

Stem Stitch or Outline Stitch

The Stem stitch is worked left to right. The needle emerges at the end of the line to be covered. It then enters the material a little to the left on the line to be covered and emerges half way between where the needle emerged and where it enters the fabric. Be sure that the needle always emerges on the same side of the line being worked, or your stem stitch will appear twisted. For a thin line, always pass the needle through the drawn line of your pattern. For a fuller, more cable-like look, push the needle down on one side of the line, and bring it up on the other side of the line, giving each stitch a slight slant. Be sure to be consistent on which side you go down on and which side you come up on.

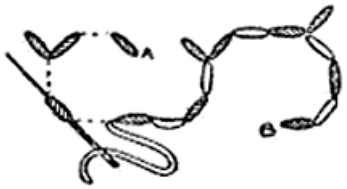
The stem stitch can be used to make outlines, or when lengths of stem stitches are worked side by side, it can be used to fill a design element.

Split Stitch

Work just like the Stem Stitch, only instead of the needle emerging beside the previous stitch, the needle passes through the preceding stitch. Also, only back up about a third of the previous stitch, not half way as in the stem stitch.

Can be used as an outline stitch, or as a filling stitch.

Double Running Stitch or Holbein Stitch



A simple running stitch that requires two passes to cover the line of the design. The needle emerges at the beginning of the line. Make a series of short stitches - leaving a gap between each stitch that is the same length as the stitches. Also take care that each stitch is the same length. (i.e., ___ ___ ___ ___ ___)

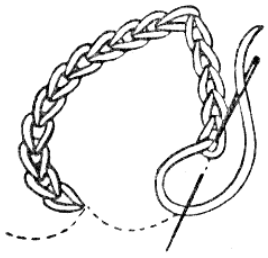
When the end of the line is reached, turn the work and work back to the beginning, filling in the gaps.

This is the main stitch used in Blackwork, and when done with care, results in the back of the work being identical with the front of the work.

Chain Stitch

Bring the needle up at the beginning of the line. Use your thumb to hold the thread against the fabric, a little to the left of the line. Pass the need back down through the fabric in the same spot it came up through. Do not pull the stitch tight! Bring the needle up a little farther down the line of the design, passing through the loop this has created. Now pull the stitch tight until the bottom the loop is snug, but still laying below where the thread is emerging from the fabric. Insert the needle in the same spot the thread is coming out of the fabric and insert it a little farther down the design line, again coming up through the loop. Continue in this fashion.

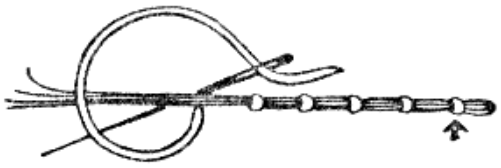
You can create a wider chain by inserting the needle beside the emerging thread, instead of going back down the same hole you came up through. The farther to the side, the wider the chain.



Embroidery: Eight Period Stitches

Surface Couching (and Underside Couching)

Bring one or more threads up through the fabric at the starting point of the design. Lay the threads on the fabric. With another thread (either a contrasting, or matching color), make a series of small stitches across the main thread. Be sure the main thread lies smooth and does not pucker or bunch. When using couching to fill in a design, you can create a further design effect by how you place the couching stitches, whether you stagger them, or line them up from thread to thread. The commonest method for working metallic threads.

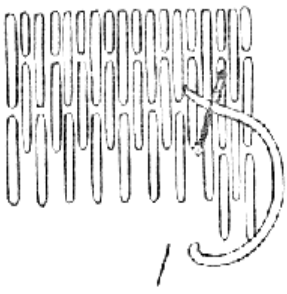


An older version of couching is called Underside Couching. In this method, the main thread is laid on the fabric. With a different thread, come up beside the main thread, pass over it, and put the needle back through the same hole. Tug the couching stitch all the way back through the fabric, pulling the main thread through the fabric just enough to let the couching thread disappear from the surface.

Brick Stitch

Work first row right to left, second row left to right, third row right to left, and so on. The first row consists of alternating long and show stitches (see diagram above). Each succeeding row consists of long stitches only, until the last row, which is again worked in alternating long and short stitches. All long stitches should be the same length, with the short stitches being half as long. All stitches should lie parallel to each other.

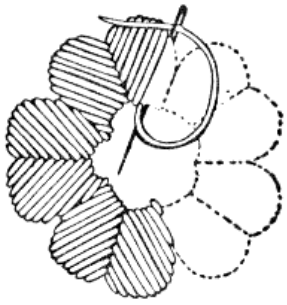
The stitches can be packed together tightly so that no fabric shows through, or they can be worked with a slight gap between stitches to create a more airy effect. This works well to fill in backgrounds, or rectangular areas. Does not do curves easily.



The modern variation on this, known as the Long and Short stitch, was also used in medieval embroidery. In the Long and Short stitch, the stitches to not stay strictly parallel and can fan out to fill the design area.

Satin Stitch

Bring needle up on left side of design element. Lay thread across design and push needle down on right side of design element. Bring need up on the left side, right beside the previous stitch. Push needle down on left side, right beside where the needle passed down on the previous stitch. Continue in this manner until the design is completely covered. The back of the work will be as fully covered as the front. Pull the stitches tight enough so that they lie flat and do not flop around, but not so tightly that the fabric puckers.

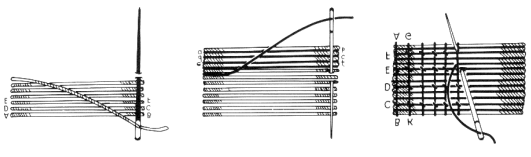


To make a raised satin stitch, cover the design area with chain stitches or brick stitches, then work the satin stitch on top of them. It is also easier to keep the correct tension on your satin stitches if you do this. The under stitches don't have to be perfect, since they will not show in the finished product.

Bayeaux Stitch or Laid Work

Bring needle up at position A and down at position B (far left example). Bring needle up at position C, leaving a gap between the A-B thread that is the same width as the thread. Take needle down through position D. Continue until you reach the bottom of the area to be covered. Turn the work 180 degrees. Bring the needle up between the original A and D positions, push need down between the B and C positions, filling the gaps. Continue in this manner until area is completely covered. (middle examples above)

Lay thread across work at right angles to first sets of threads (see the far right example). Lay couching stitches over this thread.



Crochet and Its Orgins—FAQ

Lady Christian de kHolacombe

Crochet and Its Orgins—FAQ
The Evidence (or lack of)

By: Lady Christian de Holacombe

The earliest *physical* evidence of any kind for the thread technique we now know as crochet dates to about 1800. If crochet was done earlier, we would expect to find *some* actual examples somewhere -- in old collections, from tombs, from archaeological digs. I've never heard of any that have been examined by textile-knowledgeable people that have proved to actually be crochet -- they are all something else. (Usually naalbinding, a completely different technique.)

Possible Origins

There are some very faint indications that some sort of "chained trimming" was made around 1580 (it's mentioned once in _Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd_, for instance). But this seems, from the context, to have been some type of cord, which was probably sewed down onto fabric like an ornamental braid. (The commonest meaning of the word "lace" at that time was "a cord for tying," as in "shoelace.")

A single loop, drawn through with a hook, is sometimes used in bobbin lace to attach one piece to another. However, there's never more than one loop at a time, and they are a very minor part of the pattern (less than 1%).

Lis Paludan, in her excellent book _Crochet: History and Technique_ (Interweave Press, 1995, ISBN# 1-883010-09-8, about $35) also discusses a primitive-looking form of crochet called "pjonting" which is basically a slip-stitch fabric. The earliest examples seem to date from about 1820. (She only has a few pages on the early history of crochet, but it's more than anyone else has.)

It's fairly clear that crochet as we know it doesn't begin to be commonly seen until sometime after the mid 1700s, when tambour embroidery (a chain stitch done with a small crochet-like hook) reached Europe. At present, the leading theory for the origin of crochet seems to be that it began when someone realized that chains worked in a pattern would hang together without any background fabric. Historians refer to this theory as "tambour in aria," since it's very much like the way the needle-lace technique "punto in aria" developed from Reticella embroidery on fabric.

Santina Levey in her excellent _Lace, a History_ mentions "cheyne lace" and says it was made with a hook, though she doesn't say how she reached this conclusion. She presents a sample of a primitive sort of chained net from the late 1700s, which shows what early crochet could have looked like.

Questionable Claims

You do fairly often see claims that such-and-such a piece from an Egyptian tomb (usually) is "exactly like" crochet. So far all the ones I've seen and heard of have turned out to bear only a superficial resemblance. When you follow the path of the thread, it is quite different.

You also hear claims that "nun's work," done for centuries to ornament church linens, is crochet. Again, if that's what "nun's work" was, we'd expect to see some examples, since there are certainly examples of many other types of work (needle lace, bobbin lace, knitting) from those same centuries. Still no crochet examples, though. (And church textiles seem to stand a better-than-average chance of being preserved.) It appears likely that the idea that "nun's work" equals "crochet" arose sometime in the 19th century and has been uncritically copied from older books by later authors. It is far more likely that the term simply meant any ornamental work done by nuns.

Hooks and hooked needles do not necessarily have anything to do with crochet. There is often a hook at the top of the shaft of a drop spindle, for instance, to hold the working thread. Hooks of various sizes and shapes have many uses, and it can't be assumed that a "hook" mentioned in an inventory has anything to do with needlework, even if it is in with other needlework tools or clothing. For instance, Queen Mary Tudor's inventory mentions "hooks" that turn out to be short curved pieces with no handles, like the small hooks we hang pictures on. Knitting needles too have often been hooked, and in some cultures still are.

It's been argued that crochet is a "simple" technique and "surely must" have been discovered earlier. I'm sympathetic to this feeling, but the fact remains: no pieces at all survive. Considering how much we have in the way of surviving examples of other techniques from the same time periods, this seems to most textile historians to be a very strong argument that crochet did not exist before about 1800.

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Ladies in Waiting

- Lady Elora von Effyn;
  Head Lady-in-Waiting
- Lady Isabeau de Bernac
- Lady Samantha Kennington
- Madame Adelaisa Bernois
- Lady Abigail MacNaught
- Lady Isabella Francesco
- Lady Viola di Luca

Captains of the Guard

- Don Antoine de Vallier
- Master Thorsinn Vandringsmann

Guard

- Lord Connal Mac an Druaidh
- Lord Maxamillian Kern
- Lord Seamus McRay
- Lady Veronica Francesco

Court Herald

- Accepting Applications—see
  Their Excellencies

Champions

- Heavy: THLord Sixtus Goetz
- Rapier: Don Seamus McRay
- Archery: Lord Bernard
- Shield of Chivalry: Lady Veronica Francesco

Largesse Coordinator

- Madame Adelaisa Bernois

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The Barony of Dragonsspine is a local chapter of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. (SCA), within the Kingdom of the Outlands.

The SCA is a non-profit, educational organization dedicated to learning more about the Middle Ages through reenactment. There are SCA chapters worldwide and they hold regular feasts, tournaments, balls and battles.

The Outlands includes New Mexico, Colorado and parts of Texas and Wyoming.

Dragonsspine includes El Paso County, Colorado—centered on Colorado Springs, CO.

Wherever you are, we're a friendly group of people, so why not visit us all?

We're on the Web at:

www.dragonsspine.outlands.org

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